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**Environment Department Takes Action to Fight Haze and Improve Air Quality;
Public Invited to Get Involved at Open Houses in Silver City and Las Cruces**

(Santa Fe, NM) — In order to better familiarize the public with its proposed plan to address regional haze, the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) is hosting open houses on Wednesday, October 8 from 3:00 to 7:00 pm at the Grant County Commission conference room located in the Administrative Center at 1400 East Highway 180 in **Silver City**, and on Thursday, October 9 from 3:00 to 7:00 pm at the Mesilla Park Recreation Center at 304 West Bell Avenue in Mesilla Park, adjacent to **Las Cruces**.

"Most days New Mexicans are lucky, we look out the window and see the clear views and crystalline skies we expect," said NMED Secretary Ron Curry. "However, haze is still an issue here, whether it be from forest fires or industrial sources. To fight this problem and protect visibility and air quality in New Mexico, NMED is seeking public support."

Haze is made up of smoke, dust, moisture, and vapor suspended in air and can impair visibility. The term regional haze means haze that impairs visibility in all directions over a large area. Sources hundreds or even thousands of miles away can contribute to visibility problems at remote locations, such as national parks.

The proposed revision to the State Implementation Plan that will be presented at the Open House includes strategies for reducing regional haze. These include reducing smoke, preventing air pollution through energy efficiency, reducing dust from dirt roads, reducing air pollution from industrial sources, reducing pollution from vehicles (mobile sources), and other measures to reduce haze-producing air pollution.

Another open house will be held on Monday, October 27 in **Farmington**.

The New Mexico Environmental Improvement Board has scheduled a public hearing on the regional haze plan and associated regulations beginning on November 17 in Santa Fe.

For more information, please see the Air Quality Bureau's website at <http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb/index.html> and click on "Regional Haze" or contact Jon Goldstein, NMED Communications Director, at (505) 827-0314.

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